

2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak: What Elementary and Secondary Schools Need to Know

Staff or students returning to Missouri after traveling to any area of China will be required to be monitored by public health. Public health is notified of travelers that need monitoring by our federal partners, so there is no need for schools to report staff or student travel.

The monitoring and/or isolation will impact staff and students' ability to return to school for a period of time. Your school may be asked to work with families that are in isolation to provide makeup assignments for students so that they do not fall behind their classmates.

No cases of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) have been identified in Missouri and currently the risk of infection is low for the general public in the United States. Risk is based on exposure. We are in the middle of flu and respiratory disease season, and most of the population is at greater risk of contracting seasonal influenza than coronavirus.

When a new disease is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. The best guidance at this point is to advise patients to take the same precautions recommended for during flu season:

- staff and students should stay home when they are sick;
- teach students to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues, or to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow;
- practice good hand washing with soap and water as often as possible, and if soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
- encourage flu vaccination among both staff and students;
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in classrooms.

The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) has information about the 2019-nCoV outbreak on its website found at health.mo.gov/coronavirus. It is important to recognize that the current investigation and response are dynamic, and new information about the disease may impact the approach to this disease. DHSS will keep information updated on our website as the situation evolves.

Any administration or health care staff with questions can call their local public health agency or the DHSS Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573-751-6113 or 800-392-0272 (24/7).